

# PRESS RELEASE

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## For Immediate Release

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## **TWO MILWAUKEE DRUG DEALERS SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON**

Madison, Wisconsin -- Stephen P. Sinnott, United States Attorney for the Western District of Wisconsin, announced that Ernesto Estrada, III, DOB 6-28-67, and Gregorio Acosta, Jr., DOB 5-28-78, both formerly of Milwaukee, Wisconsin, were sentenced this week in U.S. District Court in Madison for their involvement with members of the Latin King Nation in a conspiracy to distribute cocaine and crack cocaine on the Lac Courte Oreilles Reservation (LCO) in Sawyer County, Wisconsin. On March 6, Chief Judge Barbara B. Crabb sentenced Estrada to 24 years and four months in federal prison, with this sentence running consecutive to the 20-year sentence imposed on Estrada in June 2002 in Milwaukee County Circuit Court for substantial battery and use of a dangerous weapon. On March 10, Chief Judge Crabb sentenced Acosta, Jr. to 28 years and seven months in federal prison. Both of these sentences will be served without the possibility of parole.

On December 12, 2005, a jury found Estrada guilty of the drug conspiracy following a one-week trial. The proof at trial established that Estrada began traveling to LCO in late 1998 with Milwaukee Latin King members Jorge Barragon and Florentino

Castillo. From early 1999 through early 2000, Estrada, with other members of the conspiracy, transported cocaine and crack cocaine from Milwaukee to LCO for resale. Chief Judge Crabb found that Estrada was responsible for the transportation and distribution of several kilograms of crack cocaine at LCO.

Gregorio Acosta, Jr. pleaded guilty to the drug conspiracy charge on November 28, 2005, just prior to the start of the scheduled jury trial. Acosta, Jr. began traveling to LCO in August 1999 and was introduced to Spring Lasieur, whom he subsequently married, by Estrada. From that point in 1999 to January 2000 Acosta, Jr., along with his wife and Estrada, traveled to Milwaukee 2-3 times per week, returning with one to two ounces of crack cocaine on each trip. These drugs were then distributed by Acosta, Jr. and numerous co-conspirators at various locations in the LCO community. Acosta, Jr. was convicted of distributing cocaine in Washburn County in January 2001, but returned to LCO in October 2002 after serving his state prison sentence and once again began selling cocaine and crack cocaine at LCO. During this time, Acosta, Jr. was a regional boss in the Latin King Nation based in Milwaukee.

In sentencing Estrada, she stated that Estrada played a key role in opening up the drug pipeline from Milwaukee to LCO and helped create the horrendous situation on the reservation. In sentencing Acosta, Jr., Judge Crabb stated that he was a committed member of the Latin Kings, a violent, criminal street gang, and that he put that allegiance above everything else, including his own family. She found that Acosta, Jr. was a high ranking member of the Latin Kings and a driving force in this drug conspiracy which reeked havoc in the LCO community.

Estrada and Acosta, Jr. are the 37<sup>th</sup> and 38<sup>th</sup> defendants sentenced as a result of the long-term investigation conducted by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Wisconsin Department of Justice, Division of Criminal Investigation-Narcotics Bureau, and the Sawyer County Sheriff's Department into drug dealing by the Latin Kings and others on the LCO reservation. Two defendants-Donald Fairbanks and John Radermacher- are pending sentencing following guilty pleas prior to trial. Three other defendants-Pedro Zamora , Jorge Barragon, and Florentino Castillo-are pending sentencing following their convictions after the jury trial in December 2005.

The prosecution of these cases has been handled by Assistant U.S. Attorneys John W. Vaudreuil and Laura Przybylinski Finn.

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